

“The Schiege Cigar Factory still standing after 110 years”

Article given to RTAHS from: Frieda Franke of La Grange

By Marjorie Lawson

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A quaint old building in Round Top and a few tools of the trade are about all that remain to bear witness to a once thriving industry, growing tobacco and making cigars in Fayette County.

In the 1880's the growing of tobacco and the manufacturing of “Segars” became widespread in Texas. (Segars was the common spelling of cigars in the 1800's)

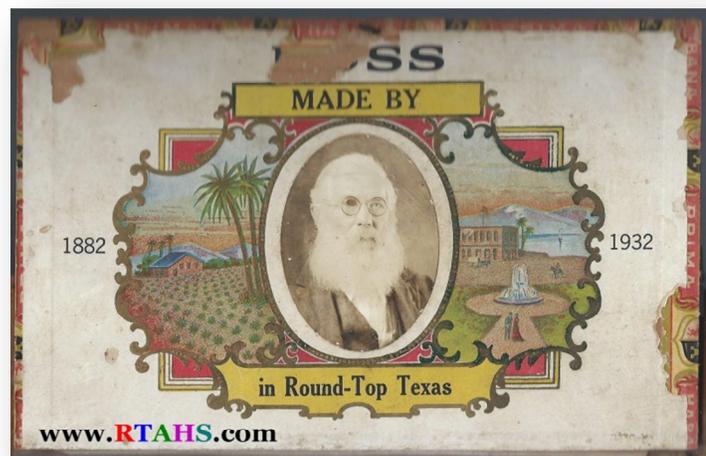
In an 1892 Gasetter and Business Directory, there were 28 towns in Texas listed as having cigar makers. By the next year, 1893, San Antonio alone had 19 cigar makers and there were 50 small cigar factories throughout Texas.

The town of Willis attracted national attention around 1895 with 7 cigar factories. One plant alone employed over 100 people, who had rolled cigars from tobacco frown in the vicinity. A story is told that production of willis, in Montgomery county, was brought to a dramatic end when Coban workers who wanted to form a union were denied the privilege and retaliated by rolling gun powder and asafetida into a batch of cigars making what were probably the first “exploding” cigars.

Cigar manufacturing flourished statewide until the 1920s.

A cigar manufacturer in Round Top, Charles Schiege, built his Segar Factory in 1875, according to a news article that appeared in the La Grange Journal on Sept. 30, 1968. He continued operations until the 1930s.

In 1932, special 50th anniversary boxes of “Boss” Cigars were put out by the Schiege Cigar Factory. The wooden boxes had the words “light, mild” in Spanish stamped on the side. The boxes carried the dates 1882 – 1932 on them.



Charles Schiege was also a cabinet maker and a justice-of-the-peace. His old factory building is still standing in Round Top. It is the only original building of the cigar manufacturing era in Texas that is still standing.

During the years the factory operated, tobacco grown in the area and tobacco brought in from Missouri and Ohio was hand-rolled into cigars and distributed to areas like San Antonio, Houston and Austin. Schiege's products carried the names of "Texas Star", "Great Sport" and "LaRosa Supreme" and the popular "Boss."

H.E. Von Rosenburg and Henry Bahr, Jr. were also cigar makers in Round Top. There were 8 or 9 others within a 20 mile radius of R.T. who were also in the cigar business.

The old factory building was owned by Mrs. Charles Bybee. It was restored the 1960's by Mrs. Hazel Ledbetter.

Were it not for the old building, and relics kept by Schiege family members and others, most of us would probably never know that years ago tobacco was grown commercially and cigars were manufactured here in Fayette County.



Charles Schiege built this cigars factory building in 1875 and made cigars here for over 50 years. His cigars were shipped and sold as far away as Houston, San Antonio and Austin.

The building is now part of the Round Top Inn